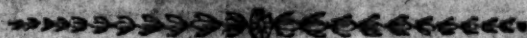


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THE
GREAT AND HAPPY DOCTRINE
OF
LIBERTY.



A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED
AT HANOVER,
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS,
FEBRUARY 19, 1795,

ON THE DAY

OF
Public Thanksgiving and Prayer,

APPOINTED BY
THE PRESIDENT,
TO BE OBSERVED THROUGHOUT ALL
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

BY JOHN MELLEN, A.M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HANOVER.

Published by Desire of the Hearers.

—Ye have been called unto Liberty; only use not Liberty for an Occa-
sion to the Flesh.

ST. PAUL.

O Nomen dulce Libertatis! O Jus eximium nostræ Civitatis!

CICERO.

Printed by SAMUEL HALL, No. 53, Cornhill, BOSTON.
1795.

INSCRIPTION.



WITH all due deference and respect, and as a small token of duty and affection, the following Discourse, preached upon the solemnity of his appointment, the late Federal Thanksgiving, is, with profound humility, and it is hoped without vanity and presumption, INSCRIBED, to the worthy, honored and beloved PRESIDENT of these United States of America, GEORGE WASHINGTON—And that his administration may be easy to himself and successful to the nation:—That the Union may be firmly and indissolubly cemented:—That both the Federal Constitution, and the Republican Rights may be ever sacredly and inviolably preserved, and the National Debt economically annihilated:—That he may long live, and preside, as a Father, over an obliged, grateful people, and have the unspeakable joy and satisfaction of seeing this young Empire, to whose existence he has so largely contributed, rising, under his own fostering, paternal hands, from small beginnings, to high, and still advancing perfection and glory, is the devout prayer of his obedient, faithful and devoted

Servant,

THE AUTHOR.



JOHN viii, 36.

IF THE SON THEREFORE SHALL MAKE YOU FREE,
YE SHALL BE FREE INDEED.



THESE are the words of our blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and are worthy of universal attention.

To be *free* is the natural, ardent wish of all mankind. And although the bulk of the human race are *slaves*, yet they love liberty like life, and will often hazard *that*, and every thing else to recover or secure it. The frequent, the bold, and tragical revolutions that have happened in the arbitrary states and kingdoms of this world, in the several periods of it, abundantly testify to the truth of this.

WHAT! but this inextinguishable love of liberty urged and excited the adventurous *Americans* to engage, at all disadvantages, in the late *unequal*, but finally *successful* war, with the parent, oppressive state? What, but this carried them through *repeated*, through *perilous*, and discouraging, bloody campaigns, under their victorious Leader, the renowned Captain of our *temporal* salvation, until they had obtained their great object, and were arrived at independence and glory!—HIM, who has been thus distinguished, may Heaven still preserve and bless!—May God Almighty long honor him as an instrument of great good, to a grateful people, thus saved of the Lord—causing him to shine in *council*, by his wisdom, moderation and prudence, as he has done heretofore in *war*, by his vigilance, his *fabian* caution, his fortitude and magnanimity.

WHAT, but the same deep-rooted passion, prompted
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ed the *French* Nation, our seasonable auxiliaries, to imitate our daring example, by which they have astonished the world? What, but being animated by the same invincible spirit enabled them to pull down monarchy, break the fetters of tyranny, erect their free and indivisible Republic, and establish *equality*, in a kingdom of despotism, of various privileged orders, and a powerful aristocratic nobility? And when we attend to the same fondness for liberty that obtains among all mortals, it lying in the foundation of all their happiness, considered as *individuals* or *societies*, as *men* or as *christians*, it cannot, (after all this) be so much surprising, if the same free and independent spirit should prevail, and spread itself *irresistibly* into all the debased and miserable regions of slavery, and throughout the whole of a despotic world. Behold! what a great matter a little fire kindleth! The spirit of liberty spreads like flame, it rages like enthusiasm, and in the manner of lightning, and fire of electricity, when come within the striking distance, suddenly flashes from breast to breast, and from one part under heaven to the other part under heaven.

LIBERTY, it is true, may be abused, prostituted and perverted like other gifts of God, and often has been.—So *reason* and *revelation*, those choice and distinguishing blessings, have been treated in the same manner, and been made subservient to the execrable purposes of deception and delusion, of pride and parade, of wantonness, cruelty and lust. But this alters not the nature and excellence of such favours from above—They are still in themselves good and desirable, and deserve our highest gratitude and praise.

Liberty, like Religion, has been the innocent, accidental occasion of many tragical and distressing scenes. But the *excesses* of liberty do not equal the *madness* of bigotry. The sad and deplorable *carnage* in *France*, in consequence of their late struggles for freedom

freedom, falls much short of the dreadful havoc and slaughter made in that populous kingdom, among the *Protestants*, a century past, in the reign of that systematic tyrant LEWIS XIV. when he revoked the famous edict of *Nantz*, which he had sworn to maintain, and thereby let loose the *demon* of persecution for conscience, in all its horrors, upon his numerous, virtuous and useful subjects, of that denomination, all over his dominion.

THE worthy, the glorious errand of the Son of God himself into our world, was, by the light and grace of his gospel, to serve and advance the cause of liberty—*moral* liberty, in a more particular manner. He came to redeem us out of the hands and power of our ghostly foes, even to set us free from spiritual thralldom, and introduce us to the liberty of the sons of God.—He came to lead captivity captive, to open the door to prisoners, to call sinners to repentance and righteousness, and to deliver them from the power of their lusts, that worst of slavery.—He came to save a world lost in sin and death, by reclaiming and forgiving our iniquities, and redeeming us from the power of the grave. These were enemies from whose tyranny, nothing short of a divine power could set us free. “But if the son shall make us free, we shall be free indeed.”

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST was a teacher and instructor in the *moral* and *religious* way, he meddled little with civil matters, and the governments of this world. In this very passage, our Lord is treating of moral freedom, in his address to his Jewish hearers. “He that committeth sin is the servant of sin.” He is bound and inthralled by his lusts and corruptions. But, saith our Lord, “If ye continue in my word, then shall ye be my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Free from this spiritual bondage.

THE Jews, either wilfully or ignorantly, seem to have

have mistaken our Lord's meaning, and supposed he was speaking of *civil* freedom. At this they took umbrage.—It touched both their *national* and *spiritual* pride, and it is not easy to say in which they abounded most. They therefore, in a haughty, indignant tone, reply, "We are Abraham's seed, the posterity of that friend of God, and father of the faithful, and were never in bondage to any man." They wanted to have it true, although against plain and notorious fact, that the descendants of such a progenitor, and the favorite people of God, could never be enslaved by the profane and despicable nations of the world. Had they not been inflated with this family and religious pride, to a high degree indeed, they never could have uttered this *palpable falsehood*—too open, and universally known, to merit contradiction or refutation.—For they had been *bondmen* in *Egypt*, had been captivated in *Babylon*, and were, at this very time, *tributaries* to the *Romans*. Our blessed Lord, therefore, does not stand to gainsay the falsehood, and provoke their pride and anger, to further disputation, but pursues his main argument upon *moral* liberty, and says, in answer to them, "whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin," intimating that in order to be free in the noblest sense, they must become the *servants of righteousness*, which was consistent with moral freedom, or the very thing itself. But if they continued the servants and slaves of sin, they must be cast out of that *free* commonwealth of Israel, in which they so much gloried. For "the *servant* abideth not in the house forever;" this is the privilege of *children*, heirs to the family estate and inheritance. "The son abideth forever." *Moses* was only a *servant* in the house of God, whose dispensation only pointed out, and prepared the way, for the gospel of his Son; but Christ being the *son* and true heir of that house, and according to a prevailing custom among men, having the power of redemption and adoption

adoption into that family, therefore, "if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." Free in the moral and best sense, by the forgiveness of sins, by deliverance from condemnation, and the sanctification of your hearts to obedience, by the power of his word and truth.

LIBERTY is the spirit and genius, not only of the gospel, but the whole of that revelation, we have, first and last, received from God. Every dispensation breathes the same spirit, both of moral and civil liberty. "Wherever the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." Even the law and institution of *Moses*, compared with the gospel, called the spirit of bondage, was yet founded in freedom, and was favorable to the cause of liberty. From bondage and cruel slavery he delivered Israel in Egypt—and under God established a free government among them. A spirit of liberty inspired the prophets of old, and they *thundered* judgments against tyrants, and a dreadful overthrow followed their predictions. Where shall we find those ancient, despotic monarchies, famed for wealth, and power, and grandeur, *Egypt*, *Tyre*, *Babylon* and others, on whom divine vengeance was denounced? Scarcely the traces of them are to be seen.

God himself, the great sovereign of the universe, is a just and merciful governor, and requires all his vicegerents here upon earth to follow *his* example, whose ways are equal, whose judgments are upright, who loves righteousness, who hates tyranny, and rules and governs by the immutable, everlasting laws of reason, and not by arbitrary will and pleasure. The Lord God, righteous and omnipotent, reigneth, therefore the universe is happy; and let all worlds rejoice and tremble before him.

THE pleasant, agreeable topic of *liberty* cannot be thought unsuitable to the particular occasion of this day's solemnity, called, as we are, by the voice and

recommendation of our worthy and beloved Chief Magistrate, to commemorate the blessings of our new government, now more firmly established by the suppression of a late unnatural, ill-advised insurrection—called to rejoice in the happy prospect of peace, both at home and abroad, favorable to our agriculture, to our navigation and commerce, and preventing, as we trust, future and further distresses and illegal depredations—and effected, may we be allowed to say, by the moderate and pacific measures of the *executive*, through the divine auspices, and some peculiar smiles of providence, when the public mind, under insulting abuses, and repeated injuries, began to grow hasty, impatient and resentful. May the late treaty with *Britain* prove happy and propitious.

THE interesting, grateful subject before us is LIBERTY, fair, inviting liberty, under all her lovely forms, and *personal* charms ; together with the plentiful, pleasing *fruit*, which the possession of her produces, in the lives and manners of men, considered as *individuals* ; and also in the peace, security and prosperity of *societies, kingdoms and commonwealths*. Upon this *Altar of God*, let us offer our sacrifice of praise, this day, and pay our vows unto the most High, which our lips have uttered, and our mouths have spoken, when we were in trouble. We have called upon God in the day of our adversity and he has delivered us, and therefore we should glorify him. “ For whoso offereth praise glorifieth me : and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.”

THE doctrine of liberty is a *copious* as well as *comfortable* theme—It opens to our contemplation a *large, but flowery* field ; we can only just taste of its sweets, pass over its several parts, and take a general, transient survey of the whole. Liberty is of several kinds, and is connected with a great variety of objects, respecting both life and godliness, the outward
and

and the inner man, the present and the future life—
Objects that are personal, common, social, moral—
that relate to nature, government, religion, &c.

For the sake of method and order, shall arrange
what I have to offer upon the subject under the three
following heads.

I. Natural, common liberty.

II. Political, civil liberty.

III. Moral, religious liberty.

All important, interesting, and highly worthy of at-
tention, and calculated for our improvement, the
latter so more especially.

I. *NATURAL, common liberty.* This may be *briefly*
considered. It consists in those rights and liberties,
which the God of nature has liberally bestowed upon
us all—a right to use and improve the powers and
faculties, both of body and mind, with which he has
been graciously pleased to distinguish and endow us.
—A liberty to defend and preserve our persons and
lives, our limbs, properties and rightful possessions,
against all unjust invaders, who through lust and av-
arice, through cruelty, pride or envy, would unrea-
sonably deprive us of them.—A right to dispose of
ourselves, and what is ours, to pursue our inclinations,
amusements, and means of subsistence and comfort,
so far forth, as we thereby injure none of our fellow-
creatures, or ourselves, or violate any of the laws of
reason and nature, or any social bonds, and decent
rules and orders of any authority we are already
under.

For it must be remembered, and deserves particu-
lar attention, that no natural liberty gives men a
right to be *libertines*, or renders them *lawless*, for all
are under law to God and nature. In the most *per-
fect* state of nature, free from all social and domestic
obligations, (whenever this may be a supposed case
with

with mankind) they are still bound by the laws of reason and everlasting righteousness, which cannot be dissolved or dispensed with. Children, minors, and dependents, under parental government, and family controul, and such as are confederated and leagued together, for some certain, temporary purposes, are hereby deprived, for their own good and benefit, of some of these natural rights and liberties, even in what we call a *state of nature*, or where no public, civil government obtains. For from the laws of reason and nature we cannot be freed and released—They are interwoven with our make and constitution, and to set us at liberty from them, would be the same thing, as to destroy and unmake us. There is no such thing in nature, *as a right, or privilege to do wrong*, so long as the nature of things remains. That is a mistaken idea of liberty, that places it in such a *supposed* privilege as this. Some unthinking people may idly imagine, that to be *free*, is to be at liberty to do just as they please, without regard to rule or law, but there is no such thing. We are naturally and necessarily under law, as reasonable beings, and cannot be otherwise, as long as we continue so. The true notion of liberty consists rather in the privilege or license to do *right*, or what we conscientiously think to be so; and in pursuing our true happiness, in this way of well doing, without any hindrance or controul from others. This is genuine liberty, and all that we are capable of, and can have. With such a liberty as this, neither nature or the God of nature ever interfere.—And whenever our fellow-creatures do, they then become our tyrants—and whenever we quit this way, of our own accord, under the false notion of being still more free, we then make slaves of ourselves, and lose liberty instead of gaining it.

If liberty, in the truest, noblest sense of it, consisted in an exemption from all law and rule, and a license

to do right or wrong, and one thing as well as another, then neither CHRIST or his *apostles* had a right understanding of it, for they consider *sin* as *slavery*, and to be made *free*, according to the gospel, is to become the *servants of righteousness*. Even the royal law of liberty, is still a *law*, and the happiness and freedom of the sons of moral liberty consists in their voluntary subjection and obedience to it. Thus the consideration of *natural* liberty has insensibly led us into those of the *moral* and *civil* kind, for they all stand in a near relation and connection with each other. Therefore

II. POLITICAL, *civil liberty*, is now in course to be attended to. And let it be observed, that to secure the aforementioned *natural rights*, in the best manner, is the very end and design of all political institutions, and civil combinations. When laws and government subserve these valuable and intended purposes, the people are free and happy. But when the case is otherwise, and these rights are invaded, and these natural liberties are infringed by the civil authority, the government becomes tyrannical, and the people are made slaves by the very power that was originally designed to protect and guard their freedom.

WEAK and imperfect mortals form themselves voluntarily into societies and communities, whether greater or less, for their mutual interest and benefit—that by their united wisdom and strength they may be able to effect those things *collectively*, which they would be altogether unequal to, as individuals, and acting in a private capacity—that they may the better plan and project the means of their common safety and emolument, the ways and means of acquiring property, glory, opulence, or any earthly, desirable good; and then, that by their united force and power, they may carry such concerted schemes
and

and designs into execution—that they may *secure* such blessings when acquired, and defend themselves in the quiet possession of them.

MEN that are in full possession of all their natural liberties, would not combine in societies, and form constitutions and political bodies, were it not for those valuable, important ends, that could not be so well obtained without it. For under such civil, social combinations, it is a plain case, men cannot enjoy all the *natural* rights and liberties before mentioned—they may not be their own judges and avengers, when the State has provided laws and judicatories for that purpose—they may not pursue their own private interest and advantage in direct opposition to the public good, and established orders of the society.—They cannot but feel themselves under restraint in several respects, and subjected to many duties, services and expenses, that are unknown in a *state of nature*. But then this is only giving up freely *some* natural rights, the better to secure the *rest*—and by thus diminishing their liberties, they increase their security, peace and happiness, and gain infinite benefits, that otherwise they must remain strangers to in life.

PARENTAL government is indeed founded in *nature*. But all *civil* governments are supposed to be originally founded in *compact*, and the great object of their institution, to be the public good. This, at least, is the case with regard to all *free* governments, however many others may have derived their existence from avarice, ambition, conquest or other wicked sources.

It must be allowed that all the great, extensive communities and civil confederations that spring from mutual consent and agreement, are, in a sense, *self-created* societies, as well as such lesser ones, in another sense, that are sometimes generated within the *bowels* of the greater, whether for the purpose of their preservation

preservation or demolition. Such a kind of *vermin* nation in civil society, (pardon the idea) though it may seem to suppose some disorder in the political body, yet there may be no dangerous, alarming symptoms, in a *good* and *healthy* constitution, whatever might be the case in one that was *insane*—that was grown *corrupt*, and tending fast to a dissolution. In the *latter* case, a zeal for a revolution might possibly be laudable and a patriotic virtue—in the *former* it merits reprobation, and must be esteemed base and detestable.

ALL rule and government supposes subordination and degrees of standing. There must be some to govern, and others to be governed—Some to command and some to obey—Some to be employed in one part of the administration, and some in another—Some in one kind of service of the commonwealth, and some in another. But yet they are all one body, and neither the head or eye can say to the hand or the foot, I have no need of thee. All the members of the community are useful and necessary in their several places and departments, and all are concerned in legislation, and matters of administration and government, either by being elected into office themselves, or electing others. And it is required of every one that he act his part well, and honestly, and faithfully discharge the duties of his particular station and character.

In huge, unwieldy communities, and when distinct states are united, the expedient of *representation*, in later ages especially, is substituted in the room of that personal attendance that becomes impracticable. And where *elections* are free, full and rightly proportioned, there is all the liberty the nature of the case will admit of. Especially where the *supreme Executive*, instead of being hereditary and absolute, is also *elective*, at short periods, and limited in the exercise of

of its power by the general compact, and fundamental principles of the constitution and union.

Who can have a right to complain of laws enacted, or taxes levied by such a government as this? What can justify rebellion and insurrection in such a state of society, formed and modelled by the voice of the people, and voluntarily taken upon themselves?

SUCH a government is our own—the government of these United States of *America*. And O! what a cause of joy and rejoicing is it to us? Happy is the people that is in such a case! While other nations are various ways enslaved, and groan under a load of tyranny and oppression, we feel ourselves free, and exult in liberty and independence.

“We are now, blessed be the God who ruleth among the nations, reaping that harvest of liberty and prosperity, which was sown in the toils and blood of our heroes; under an excellent constitution of government, formed by the united and deliberate wisdom of our patriots and sages:—a constitution which contains within itself, the means of peaceably correcting whatever faults or imperfections time, experience, or a change of circumstances, may discover. —A government, against the ill-administration of which, the people at large are provided with the most effectual remedy, in the frequent return of those seasons, in which they exercise their right of electing both the legislative and executive branches of power:—under which, they cannot be enslaved, but through their own inattention, venality, or corruption of manners; and against the ruinous effects of these, no form of government can secure them.” Let us bless God this day, as for peace, suppression of disorder, and general prosperity, so for “the possession of constitutions of government, which unite, and by their union establish liberty with order.”—For the life, health and patriotic virtues of their supreme and common head—For prospering our allies, and therein the *general* cause of peace and liberty.

III. RELIGIOUS, *moral liberty*. When we speak of the person who is the subject of moral liberty, let it be premised, that we mean one, who is a proper, moral, free agent, capable of judging for himself, and discerning the difference between moral good and evil. The true notion of moral liberty, seems; as before observed, not to consist in a license or privilege granted to a man to do evil, and to be as wicked as he pleases—Though at the same time it is supposed, that as a free agent he has such a power:—But it consists in a freedom from all violence and constraint, in reference to those things he apprehends to be right, and to be his duty, and as such conducive or essential to his happiness.

To think and judge for ourselves, is the *natural* right of reasonable beings. And if neither nature or nature's God ever infringe upon this sacred right; much less may any *civil* power or authority among men, interfere with it.—For such power and authority, on the other hand, is *committed* and *designed* for the purpose of protecting and defending these very rights of nature, as far forth, as is compatible with the state of society.—And if the God of nature, I say, has endowed us with this liberty, free from all compulsion and necessity, in the *constitution of things*, then surely no mere civil, human power on earth has a right, by any forcible, coercive measures, to deprive us of it. According to this idea of moral and religious liberty, they may be considered in relation to the government of God, and the governments of this world. Or in opposition to the *coercion* of human laws, and to any supposed *necessity* in nature. The first of these, for distinction's sake, may be called *religious* liberty, the latter *moral* liberty. We may speak to each of these severally.

I. RELIGIOUS liberty, consisting in a freedom and exemption from human impositions, and legal restraints, in matters of religion and conscience.

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When civil authorities take upon them to *establish* a religion, and especially without *toleration* in favor of scrupulous Dissenters, and thereby bind the consciences of men, by decreeing confessions of faith and forms of worship, subversive of the right of private judgment, they then invade the prerogative of God, and either ignorantly or presumptuously, undertake that which is foreign to their office, and does not fall within their proper province: Civil government is a creature of this world. The kingdom of Christ is not of this world. All civil society will be dissolved with the present state of things; and the reasons of its existence terminate here. But religion has a further reach, God and eternity are the more noble and grand objects of it.—Religion has reference to the *Deity*, and not only so, but it is more especially conversant with the *heart*, and the work of the inner man:—Whereas human laws are chiefly concerned with the *outward actions*, and have respect to the rights and interests of those worldly societies, that are only the work and fabrication of mortals here below.

AND alas! What scenes of blood and carnage, have been occasioned by the civil power thus sacrilegiously intermeddling with things out of their line, and beside their acknowledged jurisdiction! The human heart is *pained* at the contemplation of those murders and massacres, those cruelties and inhuman barbarities, that have been perpetrated by *Pagans*, and especially by such as have profaned the name of *Christians*, in carrying into execution their persecuting, bloody edicts for the fond and domineering purpose of effecting a *uniformity* in religion, and establishing an universal *Orthodoxy*.

BUT O! how distant this from the candid, liberal and benevolent spirit of the gospel! What indignation and compassion is roused in every generous breast, at the recollection of such enormities, such abuse

abuse of power, and violation of the rights of nature! In this way the most *odious hypocrisy* has been encouraged and protected, while *defenceless honesty*, in instances innumerable, has been sacrificed upon her infernal altar. But we have some reason to hope that those ages of bigotry and barbarism are now passed.—That a more enlightened and liberal spirit prevails.—And that mankind have at length discovered their mistake and delusion, and are become convinced that truth and virtue are not to be propagated by force of arms, and that persecution for conscience, is not only *unreasonable* in itself, but *ineffectual* also to the base purposes of a religious tyranny.

THERE seems to be something in the moral world, analogous to *action* and *reaction* in the material. The spring of native liberty resists the force of religious oppression.—And it is found that persecution perpetuates schism, but that *sectarism*, left to itself, will languish and die away, merely for want of opposition, to feed and strengthen it. The reason of it seems to be this, that besides a certain obstinacy in human nature, which makes it loth to yield to opposition, the flock of Christ has suffered so often, and so much for their religion, agreeable to the prediction of their great Shepherd, that some may be led to imagine that this is the great and distinguishing characteristic of true christians, and upon this account *only* look upon themselves as Christ's peculiar, contracted, little flock, when they have no other *mark* about them, to shew that they are his sheep, but only that they suffer persecution. But this being removed, their claim is lost, and they naturally sink into nothing—though, for various reasons, some may continue longer than others. It was said by one of the Fathers, in the days of pagan persecution, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church"—the slaughter of christians increased their numbers. But
 alas!

alas ! how long has it been before that *sage* observation could be reduced to a *practical* principle ? How many bloody ages has persecution labored in vain, to gain its ends, by mere *force and violence*, over that *gentle truth and liberty*, that, in their nature, are both invincible.

HAPPY Americans ! who live under a free constitution of government, and that leaves religion to the choice of its votaries—that exempts them from all those penal, sanguinary laws, that generate vice instead of virtue, and that tend to increase rather than diminish religious disaffection and a party-spirit. Let us pity the enslaved nations, bowing down under the two burdens of civil and religious bondage—Let us pray for the universal prevalence of that liberty which we enjoy, and at the same time improve our own to the most valuable and virtuous purposes.—Let it not be said of American liberty, that it produces luxury and licentiousness, petulance and party—that it makes infidels, deists, libertines and knaves. But let us use our liberty as not abusing it. For one principal and happy design of being delivered from the oppression of man, is that we might keep God's precepts.

BUT time will not permit to enlarge here, as one might wish. We proceed therefore to the other branch of that liberty that relates to religion, we distinguish by the name of *moral*.

LIBERTY under this view, is considered in opposition to two things, *human weakness* and *wickedness*, and a certain, supposed *necessity in nature*, influencing the moral world.

To the first of these, shall only briefly observe—That as legal coercion infringes the *outward* liberty, though it cannot controul the *heart* : so the lusts and passions of men have an ill aspect upon their moral liberty, in general ; and in the same proportion that they prevail over them, and acquire dominion in
their

their hearts, they are brought under *bondage*, and lose their liberty.

It is from this moral slavery, this tyranny of sin, more especially, that the Son makes us free. The end of his coming into the world, was to reform and save it—To recover sinners from their apostacy, and bring them back to God and goodness.—This he effects by his enlightning word, and powerful grace—by the overtures of pardon, and the hope of immortality.—He allures them by his promises, he deters them by his threatnings, he draws them by his kindness, he aids them by his spirit; and in short, uses every proper, *moral mean* and *motive* to operate upon their hearts and consciences, their fears and hopes, their gratitude, ingenuity and laudable self-love. Thus he conquers and reclaims them not by dint of force and compulsion, like worldly tyrants, but by applications adapted to their reasonable nature, and efficacious in the moral way.—He gains their *hearts*, and so makes them willing in the day of his power. And then they are free indeed—free from the usurpation of Satan, and the power both of sin and death.

BUT I must hasten to the last consideration of liberty, as it stands contrasted to a supposed *necessity* in the nature of things, and government of the Most High. And in order to form a right idea of this, we must consider what, in its own nature, is *necessary*, and what is *voluntary*, and make the proper distinction between them. This is what may be called the doctrine of *liberty and necessity*.

THE world is commonly divided into *moral*, and *natural*. The *former* comprehending the rational, accountable part of the creation, subject to the laws of liberty, reason and morality—The *latter* comprizing the material, and merely animal part of it, subject to passive, necessary and mechanical laws.

Reason and *liberty* seem to be the distinguishing characteristic

characteristic and property of the one, and *mere distinct* and *necessity* that of the other.

THESE two, at the first blush, appear wholly inconsistent with each other.—Where *liberty* takes place, *necessity* is excluded, and so, on the other hand, where *necessity* takes place, *liberty* is excluded. For these two, in the very nature of things, are contrary the one to the other, and mutually expel and destroy each other.

So that when we contemplate the *moral world*, we feel the reason in ourselves, of attending only to something that is, in itself, *active, free and voluntary*, and confine our views to things that relate to *reason, intelligence and choice*.—When we contemplate the *natural world*, we look for nothing, and find nothing, but what is *passive, necessary and involuntary*. Nor do we commonly confound these opposite, contrary things together, in our reasoning, any more than we do *flesh and spirit, action and passion*.

As these two worlds are essentially distinct from each other in their natures and properties, so we consider them as essentially and necessarily subject to distinct and opposite laws, wholly incompatible with one another. Liberty can have nothing to do with things merely material and natural, and on the other hand, necessity has no concern with things purely moral. And yet God and Providence are not shut out of the world,

THIS, as I take it, is conceiving of the matter in the popular, vulgar manner, or according to common sense, without puzzle and perplexity; keeping up the line of distinction between moral and natural philosophy, not suffering them to invade and disturb each others provinces.

BUT philosophers, metaphysicians, and some moral and theological writers, not contenting themselves with such a plain, simple account of the case, have laid the foundation of everlasting contention and bickering,

bickering, to say no worse of it, by confounding these different and distinct ideas together, introducing a fatal necessity to what is usually called liberty and moral agency, or else a certain liberty connected to the idea of necessity. Hence it comes to pass, that we find some have carried their notion of necessity, to such a length in the moral government of God, (if upon their principles, any such government may be admitted) as to annihilate all freedom, and subvert the very foundations of morality, making all things equally necessary and unavoidable throughout the whole system of nature. Others, although they allow the *actions* of moral agents to be *free*, yet they are considered as *necessary* at the same time—Though they act with perfect liberty and spontaneity, yet they could not possibly act otherwise than they do—Their actions are both *voluntary* and *necessary*; and so liberty and necessity are made consistent, and meet in the same person.

THE *first* of these is the thorough-finished *Fatalist*. His plan of universal necessity, could it be rationally supported, would not only overthrow religion and all distinctions of virtue and vice, but would likewise demolish all human laws and their sanctions, all criminality, and the obligations of justice between man and man. For no man can be accountable or punishable for those things that are, in their own nature, necessary and unavoidable.

BUT however the *Fatalist* might hope, by his philosophical subtilty, to disentangle himself from the uneasy fetters of moral obligations, and secure himself against the vengeance of *Heaven*, yet such are the prevailing notions of mankind concerning moral good and evil, and the laws of society built upon them; that after all, through the absurd and cruel politicks of *men* and *nations*, the crimes they would impute to him, might still expose him to the *guillotine* or *gallows*.—For simple mankind can never be made

made such refined *sophists* as to believe that men are not the voluntary causes of their own actions.

Or the other species of *modern necessarians*, a better opinion may be entertained ; because, although they somehow blend liberty and necessity together, yet they so far forth, accommodate their sentiments to the common sense of mankind, as to consider men as free agents, and therefore accountable creatures, and indeed, to allow them to be possessed of moral liberty in as high a degree, as though there was nothing *necessary* in the case, and it were possible for them to choose and act otherwise than they do. And by these concessions appear to secure all the rights and interests of liberty and morality, exclusive of that scheme of necessity, of which they are so very tenacious. But upon this principle of absolute, unrestrained freedom, what have religion and morals essentially to do with any such favorite scheme of necessity ? Though a *connection* be admitted, yet if God has seen fit to endow his rational offspring with the divine power and gift of *liberty*, and they conduct with the same perfect freedom, as though his providence did not govern and controul the natural world at all, then what *necessary* dependence have human volitions and actions upon the operations of that providence ? Considered merely as *divines* and *moralists*, I say, what have we to do with any philosophical necessity, that is so disconnected with liberty and morality, as that they can, and do, exist independently of it ? Surely this might be left to *philosophers* and *theorists*, while the preachers of righteousness and patrons of virtue and piety confine themselves to things within their proper line, and that relate to their own immediate and sacred profession, and that rest upon a very different bottom.

NOR is it easy to conceive what occasion there is, upon these principles, for *necessarians* of this class, to insist so abundantly upon the doctrine of the divine sovereignty,

sovereignty, in the absolute, arbitrary or despotic sense of it, as though it was with a view to reconcile the supposed dispensations of Heaven to their plan of necessity in the moral world: For if moral agents act as freely as though there was no such plan, then religion and morality are not affected by it at all.

BUT this naturally leads to the inquiry, why, this being the case, was this hypothesis of necessity in moral matters, ever introduced to the religious world at all? And what purposes does it answer, and what end does it serve in divinity and morality? It may be answered,

WITH regard to the proper *Fatalist*, it is plain and natural to suppose, that he means and wishes to sap the foundation of all religion and moral obligations, and by the destruction of liberty to put an end to our accountability, and having opened the door to licentiousness, give men leave to live as they list.

IN respect of the other sort of *necessarians*, it may be observed, that, besides many passages in the holy scriptures, which, at first sight, appear to favor such a necessity, and immediate, direct agency in the moral world, and upon the wills of men; besides this, I say, they seem to proceed upon the supposition, that the volitions and actions of moral, free agents cannot be *foreknown* without a chain of necessary causes to produce them: there is something so uncertain and precarious in the choice and conduct of free agents, that without supposing such a necessary connection of things, there could be no certain infallible judgment formed of them, as we can conceive of.—No principles, even for Omniscience, to proceed upon, in order to investigate such future contingences, and consequently the plan of divine providence must be perpetually disconcerted. Some great writers, as well as others, seem to have entered into this sentiment.

WITHOUT entering deep into the controversy, *this*
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only may be attended to. But can there be any real occasion for such an *hypothesis* as this, if strictly inquired into? Is the knowledge of an omniscient Being, a thing that is *acquired*, and not rather natural and *essential*, like his other unlimited perfections? And must it be supposed that the all-perfect Deity obtains his knowledge of future contingences, or any thing else, in the way of reasoning and inference, like his frail, imperfect creatures, and not by *direct view* and *immediate intuition*? Though hard for us to conceive of the thing in this latter sense, yet, unless it implied a plain and palpable contradiction, what right have we, who are but of yesterday, and comparatively know nothing, to affirm with boldness and confidence, that such knowledge is impossible to God, whose understanding is infinite?

GREAT modesty becomes us in disquisitions so abstruse and incomprehensible. That we have no adequate conception of such knowledge, or are able to explain how the thing is done, is readily acknowledged; but does our ignorance and imperfection, in any measure, disprove the fact, or cause it to be an incredible thing that God should possess such knowledge, and render it incompatible with Deity? And yet the *inconceivableness* of the thing seems to be the foundation of this hypothesis.

THE divine knowledge, of future, contingent events, where there is a *necessary* connection subsisting, is supposed to be easily conceived of. And why should it be thought that the great moral Governor of the world, who is intelligence itself, should not foresee such kind of futurities likewise, where there is only a *voluntary* and not a *necessary* connection?

Is it not natural and agreeable to common sense to suppose, that he who formed the human heart, and gave it freedom, is able to foresee its operations, and all the choices it will make, without binding it by decrees, and forming connections to render those choices

choices *necessary*? Is not this derogatory to the wisdom and perfection of that God, whose thoughts and ways are high above ours, like the heavens, above the earth? If the thing cannot be true, or is incredible, because the *manner* of it is above our conception, and exceeds our understandings, then many other things cannot be received as truth, which nevertheless we readily assent and concede to. God's present knowledge of the human heart and all the thoughts and imaginations of it, under all circumstances, is something incomprehensible to us, and which we cannot conceive of, and so is his eternity, infinity and immensity, and yet we doubt not of these things, inconceivable as they are.

I AM aware, that to argue, in this case, merely from the omniscience of God, his searching the heart, foretelling contingent events, and the like, would be to reason inconclusively, and not reach the present point; for the question is, not *Whether* God foreknows all things in the *moral* as well as *natural* world, for in this I suppose all are agreed; but *how* he knows them, whether by direct intuition, or by means of some *necessary* connection of things. I meant not therefore to reason or inquire upon those principles. But would now observe, that we use the word *foreknowledge*, as it respects the omniscient Deity, not in the strictly *proper*, but *improper* sense, and as accommodated to *our* manner of conceiving and investigating things, who by nature are subject to a constant succession of time and ideas. But this is not the case with an eternal, omnipresent, and unchangeable Being.

IF therefore what has been said be not satisfactory, let us only conceive of the great first cause, as a *universal* Being, to whose infinite mind all things are forever present, and with whom is no succession, no past or future time, and this will remove the difficulty, so far forth, as it respects what is called the
foreknowledge

foreknowledge of God. For if there be no *fore* or *after*, with respect to the Deity, who changes not, then his knowledge, properly and philosophically speaking, is not conversant with *futurities*, but only with things *present*, that are all open and naked before him.

WHAT occasion, I say then, for the supposition of such a necessity taking place in the scheme of providence, as carries the appearance, at least, of interfering with that *freedom* in moral actions, which is the very thing that constitutes those actions virtuous or vicious.

Is it not enough that he who has made us in his own image, reasonable creatures, has endowed us with *liberty*, and left the use of it to ourselves, as the nature of the case supposes and requires.—And then, perfectly knowing what that *use* would be that we should make of it, whether good or bad, has ordered and concerted the scheme of his providence accordingly. If such supposed necessity is considered merely in a *philosophical*, *physical* light, and as not affecting liberty and morality, it is of little consequence to *divines*, and not worth contending about: But if the *necessarians* of the present or any age have other views, and ends, to serve, besides accounting for the divine *prescience*, as above, such for instance, as the reducing and lessening the odium and malignity of sin, making God himself the direct author of moral evil, or justifying some fancied, and particular dispensations of Heaven that require a degree of despotism to support them, or the like, such designs may be severely reprobated; because exhibiting the Deity under a false character, and giving a wrong idea of his government, has a tendency to debauch and pervert the human heart and temper, and hurt the cause of virtue and morality. And every thing of this kind is *unsound doctrine*, or proper *heresy*.

SHALL further add, that the *foreknowledge* of God, so called, can have no influence upon human conduct

duct any more than any creature's foreknowledge of the same. The *mere knowing*, however *infallibly*, what will come to pass, can possibly have no effect in producing it.

IN short, he that made us free agents, has decreed and ordained that we should act *freely*, and whatever use therefore we make of our liberty, it is *eventually* what he decreed and ordained. And in this view of the thing, God may be said to decree sin and its consequences, as well as other things, that seem more correspondent to his holy nature, and benevolent character. And upon this same principle that our freest actions, originating from ourselves, are in the *event*, the same as the appointment and decree of God, (who gave us this liberty, and knew how we should use it) those many passages in the holy scriptures, which, at first sight, appear to consider God as the author of moral evil, or effecting it by his interposition or decrees, are easy to be understood, and explained, consistent with human liberty and the divine character. The decrees of God may take place in the *moral* as well as in the *natural* world, but in as different ways as those worlds are different in their respective natures. The divine decree of giving liberty to man, decrees the effects of it in the *voluntary* way, as much as the decree of giving laws to matter, decrees the effects of those laws in the *natural* and *passive* way.

WHEN *David* sinned in numbering the people, *Shimri* in cursing of him, *Pharaoh* in hardening his heart, and *Judas* in betraying his master, they acted *freely*, and their actions originated from themselves, and yet it was at the same time according to the council and foreknowledge of God, who decreed they should act thus *freely*, and in so doing, *virtually* and *eventually* decreed these very actions. All things are of God, in a *remote*, or *immediate* sense, and accordingly are ascribed to him in his word. But if we

we give up free agency, we have done with religion and morals.

THUS we have considered *Liberty* under its several views and forms, *natural, civil, religious* and *moral*, and have endeavoured to be as concise as the nature of the extensive, interesting subject would well admit of, and yet I have need perhaps, to ask pardon for the *prolixity* of the discourse, if not for some other things beside. I shall now close all with a few practical reflections and exhortations. I rejoice for my own part, at being called, as we are, to attend the solemnities of this day. There are special occasions that call for acts of devotion and divine worship, out of the stated seasons, on Lord's-days. They may, indeed, have been multiplied vastly too much, in some churches, and to the neglect of ordinary and social duties. And this may be the case also among ourselves, in some places, and at certain times, when preaching and religious exercises are continued night and day, till the minds and imaginations of many being disordered, uncommon effects are produced, in sudden, extempore *conversions*, that often issue, neither in the honor of religion, or bettering their own condition and moral characters.

LIBERTY, under every consideration of it, requires gratitude and praise to the great donor of it, and a studious concern to improve it to his honor and glory. Has God blest us with *natural* liberty, and endowed us with noble powers, both of body and mind, and entrusted us with the management of ourselves, and the improvement of the gifts of nature and of fortune?—Then let us take heed that we abuse not the privilege indulged to us, to the injury of ourselves or others. But whether we eat or drink, whether we are in action or at rest, whether we exercise our rational, or bodily faculties, our heads, our hands, our tongues, or whatever else we do, let us do all to the glory of God.

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WHEN we contemplate, and rejoice in, our many, invaluable rights and privileges, both civil and religious, whereby we are so happily distinguished from most other nations, let us not forget that though we call ourselves *sons of liberty*, and are the children not of the *bond woman*, but of the *free*, yet that we are not freed from all *restraint*, but are still under *bonds* to God.—That the *christian grace* and *liberty* wherein we stand does not consist in a permission to do evil, but on the contrary, that being made free from sin, we might thereupon become the *servants* of righteousness. For in order to make us free indeed, by his son, God now commands all men, every where, to *repent*, to reform and amend their ways, because he has appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that same Son of man. How much does it become us therefore, under such an apprehension, to exercise ourselves always to have a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man. For we must all stand at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, to receive according to the deeds done in the body.

AND *religious liberty*, under civil governments, has a natural tendency to encourage virtue and moral goodness—It opens and enlarges the mind—it increases knowledge, and favors literature—it inspires with firmness and intrepidity—it excites industry and activity, and prevents *idleness*, the mother of vice and mischief. *Tyranny* and *oppression* have the right contrary tendency and effect—they debase and enfeeble the mind, and encourage ignorance, and *slothfulness*. For who would labor and toil for an uncertain property, to be snatched from the owners and right heirs by the hands of rapacious tyrants? What heart can men have to lay themselves out in ways of diligence and industry, principally to support, in idleness and luxury, a set of hungry lords, who stand like the great *dragon* before the woman, in the Revelations,

to devour the fruit of their labors, as soon as it is brought forth. In such a gloomy, discouraging state of things, all enterprize sickens, the sister arts hang their heads, and the sinews of all useful business are relaxed, trade, agriculture, manufactures.—The state of our country, blessed be God, is right the reverse of this. “And in such a state of things it is, in an especial manner, our duty as a people, with devout reverence and affectionate gratitude, to acknowledge our many and great obligations to Almighty God, and to implore him to continue and confirm the blessings we experience.”

It behoves us to add economy and frugality to industry and activity—To guard against luxury, dissipation and vanity—To encourage learning, schools, arts, and every useful branch of business among ourselves, and to strive and endeavour to become still more independent, and more content with such things as we have. Let our land of liberty produce in great abundance, the fruits of righteousness and sobriety, the social and benign virtues, together with the true fear of God: while ignorance and impiety, superstition and cruelty, flourish only in the regions of despotism, the soil in which they chiefly delight. Let us bless God for the light of the glorious gospel, and for the bright beaming of the Sun of righteousness upon us. Let us thank God most devoutly for that clear and comfortable revelation he has been pleased to make to us from above, and not make him a liar, by disbelieving that well attested record he has given of his Son. And while we adhere stedfastly to the *great*, the *plain* and *fundamental* principles of Christianity, let us carefully guard against trifling controversies, idle conceits, and superstitious fancies and fooleries, on the *one* hand, and on the *other*, against a perverse *Infidelity*—against the *old-fashioned Deism* and disregard of divine revelation; and the late, abominable *Paganism*, and *stock-*
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ing contempt of God's holy word and institutions.

FINALLY. Has God made us *free agents*, in his own moral, intellectual image, and done honor to human nature in giving man dominion over the lower creation, then let us shew ourselves MEN, behave with becoming *dignity*, and act the part of *reasonable*, as well as *accountable* beings. Such as are elevated to rule over others, should know how to command themselves. Of all *slaves* he is the greatest and most *infamous*, who is enslaved to his lusts. He that committeth sin habitually is of the *devil*—Sin and Satan are his masters—accursed drudgery ! too degrading for the meanest of mankind, how much more so for the Potentates and great men of the earth ! Yet how many that rule, and cruelly *tyrannize* over others, are thus sunk and debased ! For who does not know that all are servants to *that*, whatever master it is, to whom they yield themselves servants to obey ? But he is the man of freedom, in the most noble sense, who has the command of himself, who can rule his own spirit, command his own passions and appetites, keep under his body, and make reason the rule of his conduct—who fears God and walks uprightly, and orders his conversation aright. He that is master of himself is a KING. Bloody heroes conquer *others*, he subdues *himself*, a world greater and better than that without him. To take a city is now-a-days, a trifle. He that gets possession of the *world within*, is greater than *Alexander*. For though a man may acquire universal empire, he may yet die a slave to his vanity and lust.—But the *self-victor*, is not only a glorious conqueror, *at present*, but has a kingdom in *reversion*, as a recompense of his former valor and virtue. He therefore is the free and happy man, who being delivered from the tyranny of sin, and become the servant of God, has his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

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I SHALL conclude in the President's own expressive, pertinent words, praying, that under our various advantages and numberless blessings, God would "pre-
 "serve us from the arrogance of prosperity, and from
 "hazarding the advantages we enjoy by delusive
 "pursuits—dispose us to merit the continuance of
 "his favors, by not abusing them, by our gratitude
 "for them, and by a corresponding conduct as citi-
 "zens and as men—and render this country more
 "and more a safe and propitious asylum for the un-
 "fortunate of other countries.—Extend among us
 "true and useful knowledge—diffuse and establish
 "habits of sobriety, order, morality and piety; and,
 "finally, impart all the blessings we possess, or ask
 "for ourselves, to the whole family of mankind."

To which let me only add the catholic, devout prayer of the royal Psalmist, the man after God's own heart, the *Father and first* of the kings of Israel, with a little accommodation, "God be merciful unto us, and bless us: and cause his face to shine upon us" here in *America*, a people highly favored, that worship and adore, that fear and serve him, formed by his hand into an independent nation, and into whose lawful possession he has given so large a share of this immense Continent, "that thy way may be known upon" this quarter of the "earth" among the numerous tribes of barbarous savages that inhabit this wide and waste wilderness: and not only so, but that in consequence of thy goodness, and favorable appearances for us "thy saving health," the salutary light and liberty of the gospel, may be diffused "among all" the dark and enslaved "nations" of the earth. "Let the people praise thee, O God, let ALL the people praise thee."

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